

Acts of Sabotage Involving High Voltage Transmission Towers

30 October 2003

ATTENTION: North American electric power Physical Security Officers, Facility Managers, Transmission service providers, the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Canadian electric power authorities, State Homeland Security Advisors

OVERVIEW

Several incidents involving the removal of support bolts at the base of electric high-power transmission towers have been reported on the West Coast, between Oregon and California. Although not confirmed at this time, due to the common modus operandi and Pacific Northwest locations of these events, the sabotage may be the work of a single individual or group.

DETAILS

At approximately 3:00 pm PDT, on 20 October, 2003, a Pacific Corps dispatcher reported that an individual was observed by a power plant employee in the act of removing bolts from the leg of a Portland Gas and Electric Co-Generation plant 500kv transmission tower located in Klamath County, Oregon along the California-Oregon border. This line comes out of a main inter-tie at the Captain Jack substation. A large ratchet wrench was used to loosen seven of the eleven bolts, and the tower did not collapse. The subject fled in a pickup truck after being spotted.

At approximately 5:35 pm PDT, on 20 October, an individual was spotted removing tower bolts on the Cottonwood Airport 230kv line, North of Sacramento, California. The individual fled in a pickup truck after being spotted.

On 22 October, Oregon State Police reported bolts missing from a significant high power tower in Wasco, Oregon supporting the Pacific DC inter-tie that serves as a major corridor for shipping power from the Pacific Northwest to Los Angeles, California.

On 23 October, the Electricity Sector - Information Sharing & Analysis Center (ES-ISAC) reported that two 500kv transmission towers near the Columbia River in Oregon had bolts removed from one of their legs.

There are other unconfirmed reports of possible sabotage to transmission

towers, which are currently under investigation by the FBI and local authorities. The FBI recently issued an arrest warrant for an individual with an extensive criminal record who is suspected of being involved in these acts of sabotage. Currently, we have no indication that these incidents have any terrorism nexus.

The ES-ISAC has submitted several reports involving the incidents, and has held several industry conference calls to alert officials of the developing incidents.

Additionally, the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), the federal agency that manages a portion of the Western area power grid, has increased security and awareness of its employees. Due to the quick action of Western

power companies in replacing missing bolts and making other repairs, there does not appear to be a risk of power outages occurring as a result of these

acts of sabotage.

SUGGESTED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

An ISAC Bulletin sent out via email on 21 October 2003 14:44 has suggested:

- an increase in local utilities industry awareness,
- an increase in ground patrols,
- peening or tack welding the bolts to the legs of the transmission towers.

In addition to these measures, DHS suggests that the following protective measures be considered:

- a. Transmission providers coordinate with their local law enforcement officials concerning high voltage tower assets
- b. Increased aerial surveillance be undertaken as a means of deterrence

DHS encourages recipients of this Information Bulletin to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to local law enforcement, local FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force or the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC). The HSOC may be contacted at: Phone: (202) 282-8101 DHS intends to update this advisory should it receive additional relevant information, including information provided to it by the user community.

Based on this notification, no change to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level is anticipated; the current HSAS level is YELLOW.